(c) and (d) The SPV is in the process of being set up. So far no infrastructure projects have been submitted to the SPV for funding.

Enhancement of India-Pakistan Trade

13. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India and Pakistan have agreed to enhance their cooperation in trade and commerce;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Pakistan has rejected to extend the list of importable items from India which at present stands at 70; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) Yes Sir, India and Pakistan have set up a Joint Study Group (JSG) at the level of Commerce Secretaries for adopting a strategy for boosting trade between the two countries.

The first meeting of the JSG was held in New Delhi on February 22-23, 2005 and it had detailed discussions on promotion of trade and economic cooperation for the mutual benefit of both countries. The JSG constituted two Working/Sub-Groups, on Customs Cooperation & Trade Facilitation Measures and Non Tariff Barriers (NTBs). The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Sub-Groups were mutually agreed upon.

(b) The present list of importable items from India (Positive List of Pakistan) consists of 771 items. During the trade talks within the Composite Dialogue held in New Delhi on August 9-10-2005, Pakistan side agreed to consider the request of Indian side to include some more items in the Positive List.

(c) Does not arise.

Production and export of tea

†14. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the tea production during the current fiscal year till date and how does it fare with the last year;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) whether it is a fact that the export of tea has declined in the current fiscal year;

(c) if so, the decline noted in tea-export and the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps Government are taking to boost tea export?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) The estimated tea production during the first six months of current financial year is 553.90 million kgs., which shows an increase over the estimated tea production during the corresponding period of the last financial year.

(b) and (c) As per preliminary estimates, the export of tea from India during the first six months of the current financial year has shown a decline as compared to the corresponding period of last financial year. This decline is mainly due to the stiff competition being faced from other tea producing and exporting countries like Sri Lanka, China, Indonesia, Vietnam & Kenya, various tariff and non-tariff measures imposed by some of the tea importing countries, lower offtake by Russia due to change in consumer preferences and higher prices of Indian tea due to cost of production. However the unit value of tea exports has been higher this year.

(d) Steps taken to increase exports of tea include implementation of a medium term export strategy, encouraging production of quality teas especially orthodox type of teas, participation in major trade fairs/ exhibitions abroad, lending promotional support to Indian exporters in marketing Indian brands, field sampling at speciality stores and in principal markets, exchange of tea delegations, launching media campaigns to increase consumer awareness, etc. Further, in order to maintain quality and retain the brand equity of Indian teas, the Government has issued a new Tea (Distribution and Export) Control Order, 2005 under the provisions of the Tea Act, 1953 on 01.04.2005 in supersession of the Tea (Distribution and Export) Control Order, 1957. The new Order prescribes strict norms for tea and stipulates that all teas, whether imported or exported, would be required to conform to the specifications cited in the new Order.